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THE OUTSIDE OF THE CUP

RELATIVE VALUES IN HIGH-SCHOOL ENGLISH

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One of the recent "best sellers" by a well-known author bears the curious title, *The Inside of the Cup*, which he justifies by an apt biblical reference. This suggested the title for the present paper. My text is taken from the writings of a modern religious teacher and diplomat. He says somewhere that we should all drink deep from the cup of knowledge, but warns us that we must not become so deeply engrossed in the beauty of the tracery and the coloring of the designs on the cup as to fail to drink and pass on refreshed and invigorated.

The peculiar temptation and sin of the teacher is to become engrossed in the study of the vessel of knowledge—habits, ideals, and appreciations—and to forget his function as the nourisher of souls. It is especially the temptation of teachers of English, although the mathematician, the historian, the linguist, and the scientist in their teacher's chairs all likewise succumb. Teachers of English have before them a multitude to be fed with living education; they have the greatest opportunity, in the high schools of today, to mold the character of the American people; their chief fault, which we attempt here to dissect and diagnose in order to cure and prevent, is that of not discovering and realizing their peculiar function. Too often they are not guided by the great aims of education, but fix their gaze on the technical linguistic properties of the so-called classics and of the composition they teach. They become engrossed in the contemplation of the outside of the cup.

An understanding of relative values in the teaching of English can come only from a study of educational purposes and aims. A thing is good or bad, valuable, less valuable, or valueless, in so far as it functions more or less efficiently in the achievement of the purpose for which it is used. The teacher of high-school English

performs part of the work of educating boys and girls in early adolescence. Her work must contribute to the aims of education in this secondary period. If we can get before us the principal purposes of secondary schooling, we can obtain standards by which to judge the relative values of all teaching and of the special work of the teacher of English.

The traditional aim of secondary schooling which the high school inherited is that of formal discipline, which implies that it does not matter what we study, provided that we agonize over it sufficiently. This relic of mediaeval asceticism originally was brought forward to justify the pedant schoolmasters in holding the only subject which they could teach, namely, Latin grammar, in the Latin grammar schools after the time of Elizabeth, and of Bacon and Milton, when Latin went out of use as the language of scholarship and diplomacy. Other names for this aim of teaching, such as "mental discipline," "mind-training," "culture," "development of the mental faculties," "training of the powers of reasoning, concentration, discrimination, memory, etc.," were, and are still, commonly used. The principal of a large high school said to me only recently that he wanted algebra and Latin taught in the first year in order to give his students "minds to work with," to "develop their power to remember and to think." It is little wonder that the English teacher, who for a long time was not recognized by classical teachers and the colleges, because she did not hold to this doctrine, finally came around to the same false standard.

This aim for secondary schooling has been given up by all modern educators. We can get training and valuable subject-matter at the same time, and the training which is divorced from its concrete applications will surely fail to function. We must look elsewhere for the aims and purposes of modern secondary education. Any scrutiny of the quadrupling of attendance, from all ranks of society, in our high schools in the last two decades, of the manifold types of work now being carried on in them, and of the numerous grave social problems curable by sound schooling, will show that the aim of formal discipline is no longer an actual or sufficient guide for democracy's high schools.

The chief social aims of education, which the leaders in education from Spencer down have recognized, and which the recent great educational surveys are bringing out clearly into the light, are about seven in number. They form the principal aims because they furnish the principal problems of the American people. These seven aims, stated as phases of social efficiency, are as follows: (1) vital or physical efficiency—health; (2) vocational efficiency; (3) domestic efficiency; (4) civic efficiency—citizenship; (5) moral efficiency—morality and religion; (6) avocational efficiency—right use of leisure; (7) social-service efficiency—social service.

Most teachers in secondary schools or elsewhere will readily accept these purposes as the purposes of education. But these are not the aims which have established our curricula or methods of teaching. Our schooling is not yet based upon them. For instance, about a million people die each year in the United States of preventable diseases due largely to preventable ignorance, and yet our high schools give little or no effective education in hygiene and physical development for all. The status of our industrial and domestic efficiency is about as low as is our citizenship, and yet most high schools give little or no training along these lines. In general, a statement of the pressing problems of the American people which can be solved largely by means of an education that hits the mark, when compared with the subjects and methods of a majority of our high schools, will instantly show that we are doing other things than putting first things first and meeting the dominant unmet educational needs of our people. English teachers realize this, and their meetings and journals are taken up with statements of dissatisfaction with the results of their work—a most favorable sign, since out of such dissatisfaction grows better adjustment.

Now, what can be done to pupils to produce the changes which will promote this seven-fold aim of education? The psychological changes which can be produced in pupils are about four in number: out of our golden cup we can pour, to all, educational nourishment which makes for changes in knowledge, in habits, in ideals, and in appreciations. With the seven aims arranged vertically at the left of the page, and the four types of psychological changes which we can make in individuals at the top of the page, we may make,

by means of vertical and horizontal lines, a chart, into the twenty-eight squares of which we can write the minimum essentials of an education.

Then we can ask of each subject and course of study now in the program this question: What are you contributing in the way of knowledge, habits, ideals, and appreciations to one or more of these dominant aims of education? What are you doing for health? For making the home life of our people better and brighter? For solving our grave industrial problems? For improving harmless enjoyment and the right use of leisure for our people who are today struggling for the eight-hour day? What do you, Latin, Greek, French, German, algebra, or geometry, taken one at a time for scrutiny, contribute to these seven aims? What courses must we throw out entirely, or, at least, greatly modify? What must be put into our courses to meet the problems of morality and social service? Do we need a course in applied ethics? What about citizenship? Can we meet this problem effectively by giving only a portion of the high-school students a brief half-year course in dessicated "dry-bone civics," or do we need courses at least a year in length, with such beginning texts as Beard's *American Citizenship* or Dunn's *The Community and the Citizen*? What about the methods of teaching and relative emphasis on different phases of subject-matter and training? Is it more valuable to know how to be a citizen at home and to help to clean up the community and to work for its welfare, or to pass good examinations on the tenure of office of judges of the United States Supreme Court and on the details of the Constitution?

Now, bring English to the bar. What aims are you promoting? Do you put first things first? You are the only subject required without alternatives in all high schools. From being a despised creature, unrecognized by the colleges and even by other teachers of the high school, you have crowded in until you take three or four years of each student's time. You are the chief educator of the child at this age in point of time available; what have you to show in the way of that knowledge, those habits, ideals, and appreciations which will most effectively meet the seven principal educational needs of our people?

Do we need you at all, Miss English? It was formerly thought that the other teachers of the school could do your work and they did it. Can't children be pretty well understood, and do they not get along fairly well in the world, without you, i.e., if they miss high school or drop out in the first year, as a large percentage do? Can't all high-school teachers be trained and compelled to correct grammatical and other errors in the speech and writing of pupils, and thus save much time now spent on English teaching in one class, with a comparative neglect of it in all others? If we can get into the high-school courses the essential educational subjects, and then train our secondary teachers to develop, not only changes in the information or knowledge of pupils, but to develop also habits, ideals, and appreciations (including attitudes, perspectives, prejudices, etc.) for each of the essential subjects, shall we find it necessary to have teachers of English at all? Probably not. But that time is far in the future; we yet have a great immigrant population for our melting-pot, and more will follow the great European war; and we confront a present situation. Undoubtedly it will be of great service to the English teacher, however, to look upon herself as a helper to the other teachers of the school, who are more or less directly serving the ends of health, citizenship, morality, and the like. She can complement their work and do the phases of the general task which they cannot well promote. Her activity would probably then be directed more along the following lines: (1) the cultivation of those great ideals and appreciations which make for social efficiency and social happiness along each of the seven lines indicated above; (2) assistance in the development of certain abilities or habits along the lines of both reading and expression, such as the ability in public speaking for the aim of citizenship, and the reading of literature which promotes the seven-fold aim; (3) assistance in methods of study, in outlining and organizing tasks, finding references and seeking data, getting the kernels out of paragraphs, chapters, books, and so on; (4) especially, the cultivation of habits of harmless enjoyment for the right use of avocational interest, of leisure, which along with ideals is apt to be neglected by other agencies of the school, this cultivation being, however, largely along lines of the use of the English

language (including study of the drama, good literature, etc.). (5) seeking, by the use of suitable literature, to strengthen the children along lines neglected by other teachers.

Some of the principal changes which will take place in the English teaching of the next decade or two, following such educational principles, I may, for brevity, venture to state as follows:

1. The literature selected for reading will be selected on a social rather than on a technical, literary, or craftsmanship basis. From the great volume of literature available for education along the seven lines, those will be selected which function best for adolescent youth (the psychological basis), and from the latter those which are the best examples of literary art. Last and least will technique be the basis; this will be, not the outside of the cup, but what it contains for American boys and girls.

2. Literature will probably not be selected for the reason that it illustrates the history of English literature. The latter, sometimes taught as a separate course termed "the history of English literature," will probably not be given, since it does not meet the pressing needs of our people, along the seven dominant lines, as well as other more social and less technical subject-matter.

3. The literature selected will probably be largely modern literature, dealing with modern problems in a modern setting such as confronts the American people today. *Comus*, *L'Allegro*, *Lycidas*, *Il Penseroso*, *Paradise Lost*, Burke's *Speech*, the *Sir Roger de Coverley Papers*, the *Essay on Lord Clive*, and others of this type will probably be displaced, to the horror of the stylist and literary historian, by the literature of the future written in the last decade. Current magazines and newspapers will be used even more than six minutes a day, as they are now so well being used in Altoona, Pennsylvania.

4. A reasonable share of this literature will promote by interesting and familiar example the great local and national ideals of citizenship. I went as a school principal a few years ago to Minneapolis, just after the horrifying exposures of civic indifference and political rotteness there. Did the people of that town afterward rise up and demand that the public high schools, in which the leaders are trained, begin at once to engender ideals, attitudes,

and appreciations along the lines of effective local citizenship? They did not, at least not directly. They became vaguely dissatisfied with the schools. They had intelligent people go and visit high-school classes and see what kind of education was being given there, which finally led to considerable reorganization. But little increase of direct civic education or of civically directed literary education has, I believe, yet resulted, because the guiding aims set up above, and so well utilized by Professor Yocum in his recent book on *Culture, Discipline, and Democracy*, were not consciously used as guiding standards for the selection of matter and methods.

In what way does *your* country and *your* community, Miss English, need a development of civic ideals? Discover these weaknesses; find these needs; and then look about for literature that will do the work desired. We need not look far. The ideals and efforts toward better conditions of life today have found expression in as noble a literature as has ever graced a previous age and in far richer abundance. This literature has for most adolescents a stronger appeal and a far richer and clearer suggestive value for present life-guidance than most that the more remote past has furnished for other times, valuable as some of it is. For good content and technique as well as interest, Bruere's articles in *Harper's Magazine*, for example, will probably be far more educationally influential than Burke's *Speech on Conciliation*, used as an example of exposition. Away with our subserviency to those estimable college professors of English who, interested rather in literary technique, dissection, and the feelings aroused in themselves by certain selections than in the use of literature as an educational instrument for the American people, have, from their high chairs, handed down certain technical masterpieces for all high-school students, willy nilly, to study! We very much need a committee of high-school teachers to discover and to try out experimentally a great many selections which tend to leave a deposit of civic ideals and attitudes in our pupils, such literature as Mrs. Cabot and others have collected for the elementary school, for instance, in their new book on *Citizenship*. What a great work for American citizenship could thus be done and how well then could the three or four years of required English be justified!

5. If teachers of English were to make a survey of the needs of the American people and were then to make a list and a classification of the ideals which, if made common, would best meet these dominant needs, we should have a good guide for the selection of literature for our high-school pupils. A very helpful list will be found in Dr. Bagley's volume on *Educational Values* (pp. 175-179, and 214-215). I can only mention them here, leaving out his descriptions and definitions. Among those great ideals which he claims must be made the driving forces of all Americans we find respect for the feelings and rights of others, tolerance, equality of opportunity, property rights, chastity, monogamy, parental love, respect for age and womanhood, sympathy with suffering and affliction, self-sacrifice and self-denial, personal integrity, loyalty, friendship, cleanliness and personal purity, altruism, achievement, truth loving, simplicity, work, health, initiative, independence, patriotism, national unity, local self-government, right use of property, ennobled ideals of sexual love, ambition of the right types, peace and good-will, unprejudiced observation and inductive thinking, scientific method, efficiency and expertness, respect for authority, and human brotherhood.

The pedagogy of ideals Bagley has well treated, and we cannot discuss it here. These ideals are undoubtedly important to the welfare of our people. Parents send their children to school to be lifted up and inspired by such ideals. We English teachers can from such a list get a sense of relative values in our work that the old-time teacher, using selections largely for their historical or technical qualities, never attained. Such an emphasis upon the essentials of education will, moreover, greatly increase our dignity and the respect for our profession.

Many are the illustrations which might be given, if necessary, of the power of ideals in life and of our power to transmit these ideals, through educative instruments. A teacher in a school of which I was principal for years used, with great success, carefully selected literary productions for meeting, generally well in advance, cases of discipline. She used, among other books, White's *School Management*, which contains such selections to meet many kinds of disciplinary problems in and out of school. Temporary and

life-long ideals were undoubtedly there cultivated in many different groups of pupils.

6. Training in the right use of leisure, in avocational activities, or, as Parker terms it, harmless enjoyment, is rapidly coming to be a very important educational aim of the public school. Superintendent Schaeffer, of Pennsylvania, a few years ago made an address in many places against giving the eight-hour day at once because our people, untrained in the right use of leisure, would misuse it and bring about their own degradation. Here is a great truth. The eight-hour day of work, the eight hours of sleep, and the eight hours of leisure are, however, rapidly coming. The Saturday half-holiday and various picnic and other days are coming, even for country people. A life of constant labor defeats the end of existence. Happiness and self-realization are impossible. "Life as a fine art" is out of the question. We are going to obtain leisure, and the school and the English teacher, especially, must train for this phase of life.

How can literature be used to promote the harmless enjoyment of leisure? Undoubtedly, a reasonable and healthful amount of reading of the right kind would be desirable for most persons. This reading will be of the most varied kind, because of the great natural variability among individuals, and because of the many artificial variations brought about by the manifold occupations and environments of life today. People who do not like the *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, and *Scribner's*, but who do care for the newspapers, *Adventure*, *Detective Stories*, the *Argosy*, the *Scientific American*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, or *Modern Electricity*, or even the recent *American* or *McClure's*, cannot be classed once and forever by the English teacher as perverted, hopeless, and uncultured (pronounced with a silent *r*). Many of the stories in *Adventure*, to be direct, are of a far more healthful mental tone and better for invigorating and emotionalizing for a time the life of multitudes of people than are many of the stories in either *Harper's* or the *Atlantic*. "Many men of many minds" need literature of many kinds.

Miss Mulock at Altoona has shown that these magazines and newspapers of many kinds can be procured by the average school, and that pupils and parents may gain habits of harmless enjoyment

through reading initiated by those English teachers who follow the ordinary laws of habit formation, starting with the natural instincts and interests, giving much practice and repetition in a favorable social situation, and studying the social situation in order to insure that the habits shall find stimuli in the outside environment away from the classroom. Other teachers have done the same. I look forward to the time when such teaching may be organically related to the English work, so that six minutes may not have to be taken, as in Altoona, out of the regular lesson, for this somewhat extraneous work. The reading habit is important for the social welfare. It is far more valuable than many of the habits inculcated in the ordinary routine school work of the usual type. Let us have the courage to put our work in touch with the world today and be proud of it. Harmless enjoyment is a great need, as our "movies," dance-halls, and many other institutions thriving on this interest indicate. Here we find English in touch with the old cultural, aristocratic ideals of the subject, and at the same time becoming democratic and social. She is bringing leisure, and culture rightly used, into the home of the many, which is the real mission of America.

7. What are the moral problems of your community and of modern life? What examples can you choose from literature which will function in helping high-school graduates or leavers before graduation to meet the insidious and character-straining temptations of the world of industry and social life today? Do we possess any literature dealing effectively and artistically with these problems, that will arm pupils beforehand to meet the foe, under whatever guise, with the right attitude? Undoubtedly any one month's issue of the magazines will furnish several such. "Seek and ye shall find." We do not need to rub in the moral. The right literature does its own work without moralizing and without "intensive" dissection. At present many great moral problems of communities are untouched by any school literature.

8. The average man and woman engaged in industry today is engaged in social service. The butcher handing meat day by day over the counter is feeding and making strong and vigorous the men and women of his community, who are also working for him in return. But such an attitude toward his work, such an ideal of

his daily business, seldom glorifies the worker in industry. To him, "business is business," which means that it is, in spirit, an individualistic war to the knife for advantage, supremacy, and financial gain. The laborer watches the clock through the irksome and uninspired day; the employer speeds him, fights shorter hours of labor, "boodles" the legislature to beat out workingmen's compensation and child-labor laws, and so on. Those who rise to the dignity and professional spirit of servants of the public weal are vastly in the minority. But these few have made professions of their trades. Wholesale arrests of butchers recently occurred because they had put poisonous preservatives into their meat products which destroyed rather than restored the strength of their neighbors and fellow-servants. Did they have the social-service spirit?

You will all answer that they did not, and that this act typifies much of the spirit of the work of our high-school graduates and leavers. We know, also, that ideals can be engendered and that ideals do function. We know that abundant literature, current and more remote, can be found to promote this particular ideal. The Sunday school and the churches have no such educative opportunity as we possess with our three or four years of each graduate's time. Here we have another standard as a basis of selection.

We cannot take time to discuss each of the seven aims from the standpoint of the selection of literature to be read in English courses. But we can see what an interesting and fruitful reorganization of the work would result from such a sense of relative values—from getting our eyes off the outside of the cup and on those things which must be put inside the cup for the nourishment of men and women. Our young women of today are, fortunately, studying not so much china-painting and cut glass as the relative values of foods and how to make balanced and attractive rations for people at various kinds of work.

9. What shall we say of formal English grammar, the old-style technical works on rhetoric, and the spelling-book with its fifteen to twenty thousand words, formerly required of all in either the elementary or the high school or both? The principles of grammar which function enough to be worth as much to students as other

changes they could make with other available subject-matter and activities are very few in number. Dr. Charters has reported the results of his studies along this line and Hoyt, Briggs, and the writer have tested results of the teaching of formal grammar. The few most valuable phases of the science which function more in meeting our problems than anything else we shall keep and use, but no more. Perhaps even less of the old science of rhetoric will be kept, and then not as a science apart, pure, abstract, and logical (like the mathematics to which the old mathematician aspired) but in direct usable relationship to problems of expression and interpretation. These subjects will certainly not be studied because they are assumed to "discipline the mind," "form the will," and give a general phrenological development.

Dr. Ayres's recent scale for measuring spelling, with its thousand words most used and most needed by our people in their correspondence, will be utilized to determine minimum essentials for all. Ballou's studies of the vocabularies of students will be extended to the high school. The dictionary habit will be inculcated for that great list of occasional words required so infrequently as to free us from memorizing them all except as they come by use, thus saving us time for training of greater relative value according to our life-standards. Ballou's Harvard-Newton scale for measuring results in English composition will also be utilized by all.

Formal dissection and extreme pedantic attention to literary trivialities of style will give way when the teacher gets her eyes on what she wants to do and starts to do it. "The devil finds work for idle hands to do." And many of our best high-school students who have read widely of the best literature at home have regarded the teacher of English in her dissection and perfunctory theme-assigning laboratory in about as favorable light as that suggested. There will be much reading and a minimum of style analysis. We are not producing critics and authors. Students are to be fitted for a different life. The methods outlined above will, however, prove a better preparation for those who would essay authorship. The mere critic is barren; the real author is filled with life everlasting.

10. Now what shall we say of relative values in expression and in methods of teaching? Much has already been indicated, and the

process of determining what knowledge, habits, ideals, and appreciations are of most worth to the American people—which the teacher of English may well undertake to develop without conflicting with, but supplementing, the work of other teachers—has already been indicated. Since most of our expression is oral expression, we should develop ability especially along this line. Since democracy progresses by the self-organized group work of citizens meeting in assembly, ability in public speaking, before a real audience that does not know and either wishes or should know, the audience situation and audience motive will be cultivated with particular care. English teachers have burdened themselves unnecessarily with red-inking written themes. A greater proportion of time may well be given to oral expression, to providing something to say and good excuse for saying it. Further, all teachers will be supervised and held responsible for cultivating good expression in all classes. Since most of the writing done by most people is in letters, motivated correspondence will be emphasized far more than at present.

Next, themes may well be written on topics related to the aims of education as set forth above, not forgetting the leisure side of life to which the English work, if directed at all, has been in the past too much directed. "How We Girls Organized and Carried on Successfully a Food Sale to Raise Money for the Boys' Football Suits," for example, deals with community co-operation of a vitally important sort. Papers written for other teachers of other subjects will be sent to the English teacher, often as substitutes for her own "themes."

I need not offer further suggestions. Needless to say, evolution is rapid now in the direction indicated in this paper. We are bound in the direction of a socialized education. If what has been said helps to emphasize this social aim of education in the selection and use of subject-matter in English, helps to free the high-school teacher somewhat from the college classics, promotes intelligent interest in community problems as the guiding stars of teaching, and helps to keep the gaze of the English teacher away from the outside of the cup, more than could well be hoped for will be accomplished.